

i saw you in a dream. by [orphan_account](#)

Series: [i saw you in a dream.](#) [1]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Alternate Universe - Time Travel, Canon-Typical Violence, False Memories, Flashbacks, M/M, Memory Alteration, Mike Wheeler Loves Will Byers, Murray and Erica don't play a role sorry, Telepathic Bond, Temporary Amnesia, Temporary Character Death, Will Byers Has Powers, byler, madwheeler-blink-and-its-over, mike's POV

Language: English

Characters: Background & Cameo Characters, Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Robin Buckley, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Maxine "Max" Mayfield & Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington & Nancy Wheeler, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

When the mindflayer is winning, Will opens up a portal into the past. Mike is accidentally transported into the future. 1987. He forgets Will, the upside down and the Byers' family.

Something's gnawing at him, life doesn't feel quite right, and he begins to have dreams of a mysterious handsome light brown haired boy.

16 year old Mike Wheeler goes on an adventure to rediscover the

truth and himself.

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As he steps into the tree, time stutters and skips, the ground shifts beneath Mike's feet, and when everything steadies again his face is buried into his hands. Time travel is nothing like it is in science fiction. There are no swirling lights or a zap of energy when you get to the other side, just a pain like you're being squeezed through something too small for your body. It feels like every bone is being pulverized. Every living tissue feels shredded.

Time has played yet another trick on him. Everything twists so fast he gets vertigo and before he can even blink he's on the other side, his body falling to the ground with a loud thump. Will is nowhere in sight.

# 1. Chapter 1

## Author's Note:

\*TW\* - blood/gore.

*March 31st, 1986*

Mike and Will run hand in hand through the woods where it all began. Mike keeps up with his pace, but every once in a while his movements turn sluggish, and Will squeezes his hand in reassurance. The mind flayer isn't getting them like it got everyone else.

The trees crinkle, above them, Mike's breathing is turning heavy and more sporadic. They crouch down behind a tree, coming to a stop.

It's quiet. Too quiet...

A flash, a creak. There's something lurking in the shadows. An evil no one else can see. A monster that torments them. It seeks out the weak and makes itself a home inside of their heads before killing them.

*This might be the end,* Mike thinks.

Will's hands pulsate, flowing with energy. The mindflayer comes nearer. A rift opens in the tree in front of them. A blinding white light, with specks of light purple. Circling around and around inside of itself.

"You need to go." Will says, whispering.

The mindflayer goes dead silent. The only sound in the woods is the occasional hum of the grasshopper. The calm before the attack.

"It'll take you back," Will looks at the rift and then Mike, "We'll have another shot. Find me."

*Time travel?* Mike shakes his head frantically. No. Will had never tried that. Was that even possible? They only found out he had powers about a week ago, after his birthday. Who knew what he was capable of, but... time travel?

"Everyone's dead, Mike. We need another chance."

Mike can feel the hot tears prick down his cheeks. He sniffls, wiping them off with his muddled bloody hands. His own mixed in. The blood of Dustin. His older sister. El. Joyce. The blood of those they tried to save.

"I can't leave you. You're gonna die-"

"No." Will responds, squeezing Mike's hand a little tighter, giving a weak sickly smile. He coughs, trying his best to get out the words, "Not if we redo it. N-Not if you go. Now. You're the only one who can bring us back together."

He knows Will's running low on energy. He's gonna be drained soon. In their gazes it is the promise of protection, Will is all that and more.

*He wishes he could be strong like Will.*

Mike feels Will's breath on his skin. Their faces come closer. Mike's eyes flicker down to Will's lips. Mike's pulse races, yet for another reason. They're both leaning in. Their lips touch. Time stops. His heart comes to a halt. His breath catches in his throat. The funny burning sensation is building up in his body. In their kiss, Mike feels safe, it's based on years of friendship and kept promises. The soft brush of Will's lips left him, still feeling the tingling and burning at the contact. "Please. Go."

*He almost forgets they're both about to die.*

As the black shadow creeps behind them, Mike's breathing becomes more rapid, looking ahead of them. Will jolts up. He steps in front of Mike. Arm extended. His look reminded Mike of El. The surge of power holds off the mindlayer.

"You will not take him! You're dying here, alone!" Will screams, blood pouring out of his nose as he fends off the mindlayer, and somehow the voice of this small shy boy is louder than the mindlayer, louder than the screeching and roaring. The demonic wailing that seemed to come from all around them.

"And you won't ever kill anyone else. I WILL NEVER LET YOU BACK IN!"

Will turns around, exasperated, looking ready to faint at this very moment. "GO!" He shouts.

Mike screams over the loud noises, "I love you." *He hopes Will heard it.*

If Mike leaves, he might lose Will forever. But that's a chance he's gonna have to take. They're going to die in this reality. Mike can change it in the past. He has to. They have to defeat it. Once and for all.

As he steps into the tree, time stutters and skips, the ground shifts beneath Mike's feet, and when everything steadies again his face is buried into his hands. Time travel is nothing like it is in science fiction. There are no swirling lights or a zap of energy when you get to the other side, just a pain like you're being squeezed through something too small for your body. It feels like every bone is being pulverized. Every living tissue feels shredded.

Time has played yet another trick on him. Everything twists so fast he gets vertigo and before he can even blink he's on the other side, his body falling to the ground with a loud thump. Will is nowhere in sight.

*It worked.* Mike thinks, *It really worked.*

Then everything went dark.

*March 31st, 1987*

At first he can't remember a thing. Why he's here and certainly not the reason why he's here currently.

Mike brushes off his knees, taking in his current surroundings. Trees all around. What is he doing in the woods? How did he even get here?

He can't remember. Was he really that out of it?

He shrugs to himself, coming to a clearing down Mirkwood road. Stuffing his freezing hands into his jacket pockets. God, for the end of March it's cold. He looks up at the night sky. Mike could have sworn he left the house during the daytime. The crescent moon was waxing, letting off an ethereal glow.

It's the type of coldness that reaches into his bones, as if his heart were a door left wide open to the icy wind, slamming it only for it to open again. The only thing to do is keep moving, keep heading toward home and the steady warmth of the hearth. The sky is a rolling blanket of clouds the colour of navy. The ground underneath Mike's feet is its dank reflection. Other than the darkness and himself, all that seemed to exist was the chilly wind. Its harsh bite could be felt through his thin corduroy jacket. He feels the hairs on his arm raised and the bite of the wind leaves its mark in the form of goosebumps that tingles his arms. His blood runs cold through his veins and his bones are chilled.

He can't wait to get home.

He can't shake the feeling that he's forgetting something. The thought is close but hidden in the deep recesses of his mind, but in this moment he cannot fathom even a thought. Maybe it's nothing.

*... He's holding Mike's hand, looking at him, tears in his eyes. "Everyone's dead, Mike."*

*"You will not take him! You're dying here, alone!" The boy shouts. Soft hazel-greenish eyes. Light brown hair, swooped to the side. Beads of sweat dripping down his face. Blood coming out of his nose.*

Mike shakes his head to clear the thoughts racing within. Were those memories? Who is that? He said his name. *He said his name*. He looked familiar, although Mike couldn't put a pin on it. Something light comes in, he almost has it, almost - but then it dims, leaving him confused as to what he was thinking about.

*It's probably just a figment of your wild imagination*, Mike thinks.

He's never seen that kid before. And if he had, Mike doesn't think he would ever forget him. He didn't have the type of face you would forget easily. That boy, with the light hair and eyes and soft features. Freckles on his skin and warm, chapped lips, and their fingers interlaced - but he's not real. He's just a figment of Mike's imagination.

His converses squeak slightly as he turns down his street. Chalking up all his odd thoughts to drowsiness. His head is pounding, a headache coming on, and his fingers feel weird. Their throbbing. A tingling sensation. They feel like they're bleeding, but on the outside no blood pours out.

Though the street hadn't heard laughter for a while, there were still the street-lamps, stubbornly shining into the night. It was as if they simply loved to share that amber glow, regardless of if anyone admired it. Under their steady watch, the cream brickwork brought a nostalgic feeling, notions of staying up all night under rainy skies. Sleepovers. Laughter.

He inserts the key into the door of the house, twisting it until the door opens. Mike steps into the foyer, walking past Nancy, Barb, and Steve in the dark living room. The tv loudly playing, filling the entire house up with the fake laugh tracks in the background.

*Wait.*

He peaks in again to see if his eyes aren't deceiving him. Barbara is lounging on his dad's recliner, her spoon halfway into a tub of cookie and cream ice cream. Nancy and Steve are on the couch, huddled together, his arm slinged around her waist. They're all laughing as Cheers plays on. Sam and Diane on the screen. The tv light radiating all around the room.

Nancy purses her lips, a slight furrow between her brows as she stares pointedly at him, and with an icy coldness, "What do you want, Mike?"

They all stare at him. He's just staring at Barb. He doesn't know why.

He looks at the clock on the wall. 8:53. Mike sucks in a breath and shrugs to himself, "No, no. Nothing. I'm good." He stumbles backwards into the kitchen island. Eyes wide.

*He looks like he's just seen a ghost... that's because he did.*

No. Barb's not dead. If she was she wouldn't be here right now. How else would Mike be seeing her?

"Michael? I thought you were just going out for a walk. What took you so long?" His mother asks. He turns around, hands still clutched onto the island tensely. She's chopping up vegetables on a wooden board. There was this vague sense of familiarity that washed over him. Karen sets down her knife, looking at him with a kind and gentle gaze, "Are you okay?"

His palms become sweaty. Neither of them moved a muscle. Mike could hear his own heartbeat. He could even hear his own nervous breaths. He just stares at her, eyes wide, completely petrified. Mike's legs fidgeted. He looks frantically around the room, it all becoming an unfocused blur.

*Their fingers are intertwined, "Find me." He says softly. The words echo into Mike's head.*

A set of footsteps were coming toward them, they were quick and light.

*"We need another chance."*

"Hey babe. What took you so long? I was getting worried." Max says, giving him a peck on the cheek.

*Something's definitely off.*

He furrows his eyebrow, "Babe?"

"What is up with you?" She puts her hand on her hip, taking in his disheveled look, "Do you need some water?"

"I'm good." He responds, still confused, "Remind me how we got together."

*It's a genuine question.*

She smiles sweetly, taking his hand in hers, swinging their arms. "At the snowball? We kissed. You and Dustin were fighting over me but I chose you."

"And Lucas?"

"What about him? Oh god," Max rolls her eyes, "He's so annoying sometimes. Hated me when I tried to join the party."

"Oh." Mike replies.

Something about this feels weird. Like it wasn't supposed to happen. It's not natural.

The rest of the evening fast forwards. At dinner he was on airplane mode, able to answer basic questions but not really there. Max kisses him on the porch before leaving and he feels nothing. He tells his mom goodnight and heads up to the bathroom, brushing his teeth. Looking at himself in the mirror. Why is he feeling these things? This life. This is *his* life. What's so weird about that? What's so hard to comprehend?

Mike has an odd dream.

It's the boy that he's seen before. In his memories. Visions? The details vary, he's young, baby-faced, laughing sweetly. Mike alongside him, swinging side-by-side. Chattering about something he can't quite catch but it's comfortable. All he can see is their faces. Tears forming in their eyes from laughter. Smiles. They look *happy*.

The boy knocks him off of his swing, and pounces. Jumping on top of him. Tickling until Mike pleads for him to stop. Both laughing. When they fall, Mike snugs an arm around the boy's waist to steady them. He sees the boy's cheeks burn red, a tint of rose pink pinching his face and ears.

They look around fourteen, splashing each other with water. Mike's blushing, giving the boy a smile. They're floating around in the water. The lake had a calmness from its core to the ripples that danced, reflecting the blue sky as the most sincere of smiles forced their way out of their faces. The others are there too. Dustin. Lucas. Max. And a brown haired girl that slightly resembled the boy. Their all smiles and laughter. The boy clutches onto Mike's body, and he wraps his arms around his waist. They swim together. They have chicken fights with Lucas and Max. Dustin and the brown haired girl go and sit in the sand, eating packed sandwiches and an assortment of mixed fruits.

The sky is dark, a black shadow reigning over it. Cold, wet wind hits his face, flapping his jacket open, and all at once the boy's hands are gripping onto him urgently. Pulling him along as they run through the trees surrounding them. His hands are muddled with dried blood. All he can smell is his own sweat as it drips down his entire body.

The boy's face is clear. His familiar features turn into something real, set, and human. Pale skin slashed pink by the wind, light but noticeable freckles sprinkled across his nose, and cheeks, up into his messy bangs. A wide mouth, open in an 'o' shape, and those brown green eyes.

He's suddenly Mike's age, maybe a year younger, holding Mike's hand in his. "Not if you go. Now." He says, crouched down by a tree. They kiss. His lips are on Mike's. His lips are soft and welcoming. Chocolate, cherry cola, and blood mingled in the taste. It seems like a goodbye kiss. A promise, but also, a kiss that meant they knew they weren't gonna see each other again.

And dream after dream it's always the same boy, and he's never real. That's what the boy is - just a dream.

With each tense breath he forced himself not to hyperventilate on the stagnant air. The key to this was preventing the fear escalating into all out panic. His room is dark, his head is buried underneath his memory foam pillow.

*It just feels so real.*

His heart pounds, it's too dark. Mike knows it's crazy to scramble for the light switch as if his life would end in seconds if he didn't. When the yellow light illuminates his face, all he can do is sit on the edge of

his bed and pant. The dreams were so vivid. His night is done.

## **2. Honey Dreams**

### **Summary for the Chapter:**

He's still crying when he wakes. The powerful longing feeling of the dream stays with him, lingering, unshakeable in the air.

He has the same dreams. The boy is always in them. Bad and good. For the past five days straight, without fail. But this was the first time he'd gotten names. Jonathan and Hop. Who were they? Hop? Like a bunny? What type of name is that? Is it short for anything? Mike stops himself. This isn't real. Any of it. No matter how much it might feel real. What type of sick, twisted crap is his subconscious creating? His sister... dead?

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

\*TW\* - internalized homophobia. homophobic language. blood/gore.

also, can we pretend walkman's unplug? thank you.

A sweet, smooth, mellifluous music flows gently through the grass. The mirrored edge of the world has broken into a million pieces, too thick to ever see through, in the golden light, but still the music comes. David Bowie's 'It Ain't Easy' coming from the unplugged Walkman. Clutched onto his pants, the mixtape title is: 'listen to better shit, Mike' in bold blue marker letters. The mysterious boy grabs onto his hand, pulling him deeper into the grass. Smiling. They share soft gazes.

The dulcet golden melody washes over everything, leaving a sort of glow in its wake. Honeyed, sweetly mellow, liquid, rich, smooth, euphonious. This feeling, Mike can't capture it with words. As they go through the sunlit path he smiles and beacons Mike to come. "Follow me." He says with one of his sheepish grins. The boy tugs on his polo, playfully.

"Stop teasing." Mike says.

"Who? Me? I thought you knew me better than that." The boy responds, brushing his hair out of his face. He's wearing a silver heart necklace that Mike takes notice of. And now he can see just how the sun hits his eyes. Really accentuating the green. He's beautiful.

The world is aquiver. Shaking. Blurring at the edges. Mike can't tell up from down. He's not sure he's breathing. A claustrophobic, blinding light ensnares the universe. Her blood was sticking onto his shirt as he sobs over Nancy's body. He chokes on his tears as he's pulled apart from his older sister. A gruff but well meaning middle aged man doing the pulling. A woman, who greatly resembled the boy, standing off to the side, hands clasped on her mouth as she sobs. The pain is unbearable, building, building, building - a hysterical babble is torn from his chest as he looks at Nancy's limp body. He wishes he told her how much he cared about her. He wishes he apologized for being such a pain in the ass. He wishes he told her what a good sister she really was. Quickly, a dark shadow falls over them, washing away the blinding sharpness of the night sky. "Kid!" The man shouts. "I'm sorry but we have to go! There's no time!"

The brown haired boy and girl stand next to the woman. Holding her hands on each side. The alluring boy mouths 'I'm so sorry' solemnly, while letting his own tears fall down his lashes to the slopes of his cheeks. "Jonathan!" The woman yells out. "We need to go back for him! Please Hop. We need to- we, we can't just leave him there."

"He's already gone. I'm sorry." 'Hop' says.

He's still crying when he wakes. The powerful longing feeling of the dream stays with him, lingering, unshakeable in the air.

He has the same dreams. The boy is always in them. Bad and good. For the past five days straight, without fail. But this was the first time he'd gotten names. Jonathan and Hop. *Who were they? Hop? Like a bunny? What type of name is that? Is it short for anything?* Mike stops himself. This isn't real. Any of it. No matter how much it might feel real. What type of sick, twisted crap is his subconscious creating? His sister... dead?

It's several minutes before his thoughts finally clear. Mike stumbles into the bathroom down the hall, switching on the light. Grimacing at the brightness. It takes a moment to get used to it. He looks at himself in the mirror, purple hollow circles underneath his eyes. He's always waking up in the middle of the night now. Mike opens the cabinet, reaching for the pills on the shelf. Pills that his father takes to fall asleep easier. He isn't sure what they are exactly but maybe it'll help. He takes one, washing it down with tap water.

*Why is this shit affecting him so much?*

He doesn't dream of the boy the rest of the night.

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*Friday, April 6th, 1987*

He had thought a great deal on the subject during yesterday's fitful night of sleep, and he had come to the troubling conclusion that he actually likes the boy in the dreams. I mean how crazy is that? First of all, he's not real and second, he's a guy! A guy! It's just something

about him - so entralling, so mysterious and gentle natured, so - well, beautiful.

*You made him up. He's not real.*

He walks down the school hallway, through the crowds of rowdy teenagers, already seeing his friends from down the hall. Dustin fumbles into his locker, grabbing for textbooks, as he tries his best to keep up with Max and Lucas's bickering. They throw little passive aggressive looks at each other before turning away.

He takes in a deep breath before heading over to where his friends are standing. Steadyng his nervous jitters. Putting on his best fake-smile. They don't seem to see the mask he wears.

"Hey guys."

"Hey." Three voices respond.

"How are we this fine morning?" Dustin smiles, joking.

"Good, I guess. I mean - I think I'm just kinda nervous about that chemistry exam."

"You're gonna do fine." Max takes his hand in her's. He pulls away slightly before easing into the touch. "Unless you didn't study."

*Why do things feel so weird?*

"You'll ace it for sure. Nothing to worry about." Lucas adds on before Dustin closes his locker shut and they begin walking to their respective classes. They're all walking shoulder to shoulder, talking about something Mike isn't exactly inclined to listen to.

"What are you guys doing later? Sleepover?" Dustin asks.

"Ugh, I wish. Me and my mom have something planned. Said she wanted to spend more time with me. Because the only time we spend together is when we're both hiding from my shitty dad. If that even counts." Max groans, letting go of Mike's hand.

*Finally.* His palms are all sweaty now. It's not a good feeling. "I can't. Mandatory family dinner."

Lucas adds on: "My dad's brother's in town."

"Watch it, cocksucker!"

Mike's heart nearly jumps into his throat as he hears Troy's voice bark behind him in the school hallway. Panicked thoughts run through his mind.

*He knows! How does he know?*

Luckily, he wasn't the target of Troy's wrath this time, as he saw him shoving some poor soul out of the way. But the way Mike had just reacted had drawn the bully's attention.

"What's wrong, Frogface? Thought I was talking to you? Not this time, fag." Troy barked with laughter. Mike felt his face heat up as he gave a half-hearted reply.

"Fuck you, Troy." Apparently the other boy had better things to do than to mess with Mike further, he only answered with a sneer before moving along. However the whole experience unnerved Mike quite a bit.

No one could find out. No one could ever find out about any of it. He needs to make sure this whole thing stays a secret forever.

*Just be normal, He thinks. Be normal.*

Being different isn't necessarily a bad thing for him. It was the ridicule that came along with not following the social conduct. There's no justice for the creative, no safe haven for the weaker ones. There was only hate from the ones looked up upon. And the '*satanic*' panic doesn't make it any better.

Their whole friend group is used to being bullied. Although everyone in the school knows better than to mess with Max. For Dustin it's his tooth disease. For Lucas it's the color of his skin. And for Mike it's always been for being queer.

He wonders how they know it. How they've always seemed to know it. *But there's nothing to know - he isn't queer. That's not who Mike is. Mike isn't queer. He doesn't have anything against them, but...that just isn't for him.*

"Mike? Buddy? Are you okay?"

Dustin.

And he's brought out of his stupor. "Yeah. M' good." He replies.

"You sure?" Lucas jumps in.

"Completely."

"Don't listen to him. He lacks basic social constructs."

"He's an asshole." Max says, scowling as she looks into the crowd of people. She comes to a stop before the door of her and Lucas's classroom, giving Mike a goodbye cheek kiss. "Alright. Anyway. See you later, Wheeler."

It was safe to say he bombed that chemistry exam.

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*Saturday, April 7th, 1987*

The scent in the air was a combination of mint, the Farah Fawcett hairspray Eddie uses, and generic air freshener - it smells strangely homely. Family video has been home for the past year. It's all a disorganized mess. Boxes of unshelved tapes in the back room, cassette tapes covering the entirety of the counter. Polished flooring. The loop sound of some action movie playing softly in the background, on the tiny tv glued to the wall to the far left, filling up the quiet atmosphere.

Robin sits on her stool, focused on her afternoon reading. It's her twelfth(?) book of the week. Eddie's walking around the store, putting the tapes back in their correct aisle and place. He's the only one out of the three that actually cares about cleaning up.

"Hey, dingus!" Robin calls out, looking up from her page, just as Eddie rounds the corner into another isle. He stops in his tracks, holding about four vhs tapes in his arms.

"Yeah?"

"Can you just chill for a second? You're pacing around the store. I can hear you, you know. Actually, I can hear everything you are *extremely* loud."

"Fine but it won't be my fault if you get fired."

"Fired? How am I gonna get fired, dingus? I'm the manager... I could fire you." She jokes.

"Sure you would." He says back before disappearing down the third aisle. Ignoring her comments.

Robin gets up from her seat, standing next to Mike by the counter, bumping his shoulder. She whispers, "I would." A companionable grin playing on her features. Mike knows she would never do that. Not in a million years. As much as it pains her to admit it, her and Eddie are best buds. Have been for a year or so. It's a fun back and forth. Mike

always laughs at their insistent bickering.

"Hey. I actually wanted to know if there was anything bothering you. You haven't said much today and usually you're a chatterbox."

*Robin can read him like a book.*

"I don't know. I haven't been feeling too great for the past week. I feel like something's off - nevermind, maybe it's stupid." He dismisses his feelings.

"No, it's not. Trust me." She reassures him, " 'Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them, that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality.' Lao Tzu. He was a Chinese philosopher," She shrugs, "But I think it applies."

He nods, really trying to take in and understand the full meaning of the words. *Let reality be reality.* Why is he so worked up about the dreams? Why are they affecting him so much?

The door swings open, the bell above it jangling. Max opened it wide and stepped through. Ponytail swinging proudly. Her hands wrapped around her light blue backpack. Giving a big smile to Mike as she looks directly at him.

*Let reality be reality.* Why does his relationship with Max feel so *unnatural* ?

"Hey, Wheeler." She says approaching him and Robin. "Hey, Rob."

"Hey." They say in unison, exchanging looks with one another.

*Why does he have to wear his heart on his sleeve?* Robin probably saw the awkward nervous expression on his face the split second it came on. The second he, himself felt it. Robin was good at that too, picking up on people's emotions and the energy they sent out.

"I'm having such a shitty day. I have *tons* of calc homework." Max exhales, dropping her bag down on the counter. She unzips it, trifling through it, she reaches for something before handing it to Mike, "Here."

She hands him a tape. The movie they watched a few nights ago. Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home. And god, Mike expected something else, for a time travel movie it was pretty boring. Max seemed to like it. They made popcorn, cuddled up on the sofa in the basement, and Mike tried his hardest to brush off any lingering contact. But as these things usually go, she kissed him at the end of the night. He didn't reciprocate. Although he's pretty sure Max didn't notice since she didn't say anything. And still hasn't. He didn't get why he all the sudden felt weird being with her. It's getting harder to actually remember what they were like before. *Did he ever feel all romantic and bubbly about her? Did he ever feel that way around her?* Why is he making this so weird? They're dating. She's his girlfriend. Of course he felt that way about her - at some point in time. Right? *Right.* The more he tries to force it to feel normal the weirder it gets.

He doesn't get why it feels more natural for him to be with random dream guy (*or any guy for that matter*) than with one of his best friends. He doesn't want to hurt her. He doesn't want to end their friendship about something so stupid. *Queer thoughts.*

"Thanks."

"No problem. Wanna come by my house later? You could help me with my *calculus* ."

Mike's pretty sure it's not calculus she wants help with. *Oh god, have they done it?* He's certain they hadn't. He's not sure if he could handle that . "I, I, uh, actually, my mom needs help with something." He makes up a quick-on the spot lie. "Yeah. My mom needs help. Sucks though, I would have *loved* to come over."

*Lie.*

"Oh, really?" She says suggestively.

He swallows thickly, looking around the store, searching for something to save him. To throw in a life-line. Goddamn it, anything. *Why is this so damn uncomfortable?*

And thank god for Robin. "Ew. No one wants to hear your weird flirting, children. Especially not *suggestive* flirting." Her face is all disgust.

"Alright." Max throws her book bag back on her shoulders, "I'll see you later." She gives a short chaste kiss to his cheek. "Call me."

He nods, unsure if he'll actually call her, "See you."

He's thinking of breaking up with her. Mike just doesn't know how to let her down easy. *Why be a part of something he doesn't want? Why be with a girl-* He needs to slow down. He can't just assume he's gay because of dream guy. *Well, it's not only him but Mike's gonna disregard that fact. Disregard the fact that he actually punched his crush in the seventh grade for liking him. (Also the fact that being with Max makes him want to actually vomit.)*

After Max leaves Robin looks at him, disappointed, "Wheeler, let me give you another piece of advice. Don't string her along." She pats his shoulder, then returns to her book.

*Don't string her along.* She's right.

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Mike lays his head down on his pillow, thinking of all that went on today. How is he gonna let Max down gently?

*I don't know how to,* He thinks.

He tries to keep his eyes open for as long as possible, he really does. But it's hard, he's drowsy and the blankets covering him are so comfortable. Soon, that was all that Mike was aware of was the soft mattress underneath him, and the warmth of the sheet. His eyes began to drift closed. Then it was just him and his dreams.

The front door slam shut. Mike is speechless. The sobs were stifled at first as he attempted to hide his grief, then overcome by the wave of his emotions he broke down entirely, all his defences washed away in

those salty tears. Mike had always been so self-conscious when he cried but now he just gave way to the enormity of his heartbreak. He sobbed into his hands, the tears dripped between his fingers. A new wave of tears, a hot trail of agony as his slim frame shook in each rake of emotions.

In Mike's sobbing was the sound of a heart breaking.

When he cried there was a rawness to it, the pain is a fresh wound. He clasped onto something for support, anything, the back of the couch as he hovered over it, and then his whole body shook once again.

"Mike?"

When he turned at last to face the woman, he was a picture of complete and utter pity. It was the same woman who shouted the two names in his previous dream. She frowns, then sweeps him up to sit down on the couch. Hugging him. "I'm sorry." She says. "He's not thinking. I know he's not."

Mike cries over her shoulder, as she soothes him, rubbing his back in a circle motion. "Ever since you two were little he followed you around everywhere. Looked at you like you hung the moon and stars."

He lets out a short wet laugh. Wiping at his tears as they continue to fall. They break apart from the hug, the woman putting his hands in hers.

"I see how he still looks at you. A momma knows. Like you're the only one in the room." She smiles at him, sadly. His own smile turns

blank, returning to his suffering state. He cries and she holds him in her arms. It makes him feel small again. "You *have* to know that we all love you. You're family."

*You're family.*

**Notes for the Chapter:**

oh, Mike likes the boy(Will) in his dreams but says he isn't queer? that seems a little gay. bahaha.

Check out Pieces, Robin's pov that corresponds to this chapter.

thank you for reading !! any comments or criticisms will be well received.

<3.

### **3. The Suicide of 61'**

#### **Summary for the Chapter:**

"I love you," He mumbles in between kisses, ignoring how loose and hollow the statement feels against his tongue, even when she (hesitantly) returns it back. He sneaks a few more pecks to the side of her cheek before Max is squirming away again.

Messy, orangish-red wavy curls bounce against her shoulders as she gets up from the bed, to a stand, white shorts with different multicoloured stripes visible for barely a second before bright neon orange covers it in the form of an oversized t-shirt.

"Woah, where are you going?" Mike asks, just as Max reaches out to grab the doorknob.

She stills and turns to look back. Then answers, as if it were obvious, "The kitchen."

or, in which, Mike experiences deja-vu upon entering the old Byers' home and figures something detrimental out.

#### **Notes for the Chapter:**

\*TW\* - mentioned suicide. internalized homophobia.

I know it's been a month. But I'm back. (I'm having a burnout with school and work and all the WIP's I have. Sorry if the updates for this aren't so consistent.) I was having major writer's block with this chapter but here it is. Finally. Also, yes, I used Nancy's drunken speech in s2 for Mike. It just fit.

Hope you enjoy! <3.

Mike unloads the groceries from the back of his mom's blue chrysler. He had to go into town to pick up Holly from Saturday-school as she

shopped at Bradley's. His mind is somewhere far off, thinking about nothing really - just contemplating reality.

He's overanalyzing things. They're just dreams. *Dreams*. That also happen to come to him in the middle of the day. What would you consider those? Flashbacks?

*They can't be flashbacks if it's not real! You've gone batshit crazy! Get help! Tell someone! Shut up about it! Call Robin!*

He can't do that. He can't do that without spilling over and telling everything he's been feeling, dreaming, seeing. Then he would be sent to a nuthouse, probably penthurst. *That would be great.*

There's been (*extra*) strange things happening recently in his dreams, he's gaining more insight into them. Into the world he created in his mind. The birds in the sky fly slower, the trees have an odd appearance, like they're made of thousands of tiny little squares. Pixelated like a video game. Some dreams go in slow motion, he gets no words, just facial expressions that tell. Other's go faster, quicker, he's cognizant of everything going on, he can hear people talking, he can feel things like he's actually there. The ground shakes underneath him but he's the only one that sees it. His ears. He hears metal scraping all the time. It's constant, non-stop. The boy smiles at him. They bicker. They kiss. They're at the park side-by-side on the swings, the store arguing over which snack mix is superior, the arcade playing Dig Dug, they play d&d with the party, including with that girl, walking in a sunny clearing, the woods crouched down by a tree, the basement playing some game on the Atari. It's always the same thing, *blushing, blushing, blushing*.

It makes him want to tear his own ears out just for the sound to stop.

He wants to scream out but he can't. He's frozen in the moment, unable to change any of it. His body feels upside down, capsized. He feels pain in his ribs, his fingers. Then the daylight leaves, the heat with it. A black shadow reigns over the sky. It invokes fear in him. Pain radiates around his skull and there is instantly an odour he's not familiar with. Part of it is rotten carcass, dampness, and blood, but there's yet another stronger scent he can't place. Whatever it is it isn't natural, human even, and the fumes fill his lungs and stomach. Every muscle of his gut contracts at once with a violent surge.

It's always the same moment replaying over and over. Him flinging himself at Nancy's body, the man named Hop pulling him back, the woman with caring features hysterically crying and calling out for Jonathan. The boy *and* girl attached to her side, shivering, blood dripping down their noses. Tears falling down.

*Stop dissociating!* He thinks.

Then he sees Chrissy White and Jason Carver crossing the street. Hand in hand. Laughing about something. Mike's heart rate spikes.

*"Mi-e! Mike! Come i-n! Are you there? C-CODE R-D! CODE RED!" The static from the supercomm over powers Dustin's voice at certain moments but Mike gets the gist of it. Code red. He almost trips as he gets up from the bed, exchanging looks with the boy, then grabs at the walkie talkie.*

*"It's me. Over."*

*"Thank god! You can't just run away like that Mike! We thought something happened... Well, something did happen. That girl, the*

*cheerleader, Chrissy? Something happened to her and me and Max think it's the - We could use your help, man. That dickhead Jason is threatening us. Eddie too. He thinks it's the drugs he gave her. Over."*

*A second of silence.*

*"Well, was it?..."*

The world is a blur, random images seem to float aimlessly around in the pool of his thoughts, as though they were being blown about viciously by a hurricane. The sound of his mother's voice momentarily brought him back to the outside world, but after a second he's lost once again. He can feel her looking at him, staring at him dead in the eye, but couldn't keep focus. The whole world simply feels low resolution, a bad quality movie. Confusion blossoms in his heart. *What is going on?*

The bags drop from his hands, as does his heart.

*More ghosts.*

"Michael!" His mother calls out. His eyes are glued to the spot the two teenagers were just in. They disappear out of his line of sight, skittering down the next block.

*They're not DEAD !*

He zips his head around, facing his mother who now looks more than disappointed. She points at the bags, now all scattered across the pavement, one hand on her hip, "The bags!"

---

The egg yolk sun pours through the cracks of his blinds and awaits entrance into Mike's eyes. Sight still in the clutches of the night's glue, he hesitantly rubs the dreams away. Thoughts of the visions in sleep come and go in waves, clinging on to the very last memory of the night but with little success. He supposes this is something the majority of people would consider beautiful, but he found it strange, hard even, to find something so meaningful in something so everyday. It's not like the sun wouldn't rise, it had, after all, been reliably happening since the beginning of time. So what's so special about it?

Upon waking, Mike burrows himself back into the warm, soft sheets. He rubs the remainder of sleep from his eyes and gazes at the person pressed up against his body. *Max*. Her eyes opening and closing sporadically, her chest rising and falling.

Whenever the mysterious boy crosses his mind again, he doesn't know how to feel. All he knows is it's not normal. It isn't normal to think about someone other than his girlfriend, let alone *a boy*, as often as he does - at school, at work, during hangouts with the party, in bed during sleepless nights, and all the times in between... it just isn't.

So, instead of facing them - the weird feelings, he tunes them out by internally chanting, *he doesn't exist, he doesn't exist*. Because maybe - just maybe - if he says it frequently enough, it'll start to become true.

He doesn't exist, yet - *No*. He just doesn't exist. At all.

Everything's centred around the boy, the boy, the boy...

*Stop it,* Mike thinks to himself as he presses a kiss to the side of Max's cheek.

She squirms under him, scrunching her face in annoyance. "What time is it?" Her voice is heavy with drowsiness. The kind that comes along with just waking up. He doesn't respond, only continues pecking her face in response to the alarm that has been blaring mercilessly in his ears since the moment he woke.

He's feeling it right now, the wrongness that flashes shades of red in his eyes like a broken light-bulb. And he knows the only way to make it go away is to focus on Max, and *only* Max.

*What the hell is wrong with me?*

She giggles, "Mike, stop." Then proceeds to throw a pillow at him, which he dodges. Despite her own order, she winds her hands up to his cheeks, and pulls him close enough to kiss him on the lips.

Incorporating quickly, he presses his lips firmly against hers, needing to feel something. *Anything*. It remains chaste, but the eagerness is more than present.

"I love you," He mumbles in between kisses, ignoring how loose and hollow the statement feels against his tongue, even when she (*hesitantly*) returns it back. He sneaks a few more pecks to the side of her cheek before Max is squirming away again.

Messy, orangish-red wavy curls bounce against her shoulders as she gets up from the bed, to a stand, white shorts with different multicoloured stripes visible for barely a second before bright neon orange covers it in the form of an oversized t-shirt.

"Woah, where are you going?" Mike asks, just as Max reaches out to grab the doorknob.

She stills and turns to look back. Then answers, as if it were obvious, "The kitchen."

He sighs. *Always hungry*. But so is he, so he responds, "Wait up."

---

Mike rises up from tying his converse shoe-laces, and looks between his friends and the abandoned house in front of them. The porch is sagging in the middle, two broken dusty chairs on it, the house is at the end of the main road, and the paint on the outside is chipping, white and grays. The roof is tan and the side is a shade of greenish-blue.

"Remind me why we're doing this again?"

Lucas looks at him and then frowns. "Because,"

*What a concise reason.*

"You seriously don't wanna explore? For once in your life?"

Mike scrunches his eyebrows up. "It's more like breaking and entering."

"What? Are you scared?" Dustin tacks on, with a coy smile.

Mike quickly responds with: "No. Of course not."

"Alright then," Max says, flashing a Cheshire grin and clicking on her flashlight. She skates forward and then looks back at the three boys, stopping right before she can hit the porch. "Coming?"

Max takes them on a 'tour' until they eventually settle down into a room, *one he feels he's been in before*, at the end of the hall with dinosaur wallpaper. The entire house is empty and dark, and honestly, makes him shudder, and his skin crawl.

"You know the story right? About this house and why it's haunted?" Lucas asks, a hand holding up Max's flashlight to his illuminated face. The only light in the darkness.

Max shakes her head and so does Mike.

Lucas gapes like he can't believe it. "No one told you? Seriously? Alright. I'll tell the story." He says with a look at Dustin. "There was this guy. His name was Byers. He was crazy. Clinically insane. His

neighbors said they heard howling in the middle of the night, and they supposedly found his dead dog thrown in the trash in town. Wrapped up in plastic,"

Mike grimaces. The image itself is just nasty.

"And one day he snapped, supposedly he was depressed and he hung himself."

Mike's heart begins beating faster. He sees Max tuck a piece of her hair behind her ear as it was falling out of place in her high ponytail, "Which room was it in?"

*Ok. No, no, no.* It makes something deep in him quiver and stir, disgusted by even the mention of possibly being in the same space as a corpse.

He runs down the hall and into the bathroom.

*Wait. How did he know where the bathroom is right now?*

His heart is pounding. He feels like he's having a panic attack. Is that what this is?

Mike tries the lights. They turn on, and flicker. The lights are dim and soft on the eyes.

He braces his hands on both sides of the sink and hopes that all this shit will just go away already.

Mike's in an odd daze. When someone knocks on the other side of the bathroom door, he nearly jumps out of his own skin.

"Mike?" A voice calls out from the other side, and it takes him a few moments to recognize who it is before she speaks again. "Are you okay?"

He groans audibly, slacking his weight and shutting his eyes in exasperation. It's just the person he doesn't want to see, yet for some reason, he allows them passage.

When the door cracks and creaks open, Mike isn't surprised to see Max appear, crossing her arms, in worry (*and slight annoyance*.) She takes in the image in front of her, of Mike, who makes no effort to remove himself from his position against the sink. "Are you sick?"

"M' fine."

Max purses her lips and looks at him unconvinced. "Really? Cause' you don't look it."

He straightened out his back. The floor looks all crooked, and he nearly falls against the wall as he breathes out, "Yeah. I'm fine."

"Okay," She shrugs, and then leans up to press a chaste kiss to his

lips. Sure enough, his eyes close, and he submits with a sigh, though it doesn't take long for his face to scrunch up before he pulls away.

"Mike?" She asks in confusion, tilting her head, "What's going on?"

He sighs out heavily again, almost deep enough to be considered another groan. He's so lost. When he does look at her again, it's dizzying, confused, distant, that staring into her eyes is like staring right into two black voids. Her expression instantly turns more concerned.

"What are we doing?" He asks bitterly.

"Huh?"

"I mean us? Why are we...?" He trails off, unsure of how to word everything on his mind.

"What are you talking about, Wheeler?" She asks, brows frowning.  
"I'm pretty sure you're getting sick or something."

"All we do is pretend."

"Pretend?"

"Yeah, pretend, like... Y'know... like everything's okay, and our entire relationship makes any sense at all..." He motions between the

two, “Like, it’s great. Like-like we’re in love, and everything’s great-it’s all just bullshit.”

He watched as Max’s face crumbled. She held onto his gaze, looking into his eyes desperately, as though searching for the real Mike. “Like we’re in love? What are you saying, Mike?”

“I feel weird being with you, cause’ I need to stop... Stop pretending.”

“You need to stop pretending? What does that even mean?” She backs up, scoffing. “So everything you’ve told me - everything between us is all just bullshit?” He doesn’t know how to respond without revealing that he’s, he’s-

Max looked at the dirty bathroom tiles, lowering her tone. “I love you.”

“No. You’re only saying that because you feel like you have to.”

“I mean it.”

He inhales and yells, “Well I don’t love you!” It comes out louder than he expected, and he immediately regrets it. Lucas and Dustin must have definitely heard that.

Her face is completely red. Mike has seen that look before. That’s

*Mad-Max*. She clutches onto her skateboard a little tighter, so tight Mike thinks it's about to snap in half. "Fine." She says, but he knows it's anything but fine. "Screw you."

He looks in the mirror in front of him. It's incredibly smudged and dirty, broken, with pieces missing.

*"Byers!" Mike says, flinging himself at the small frail boy in a hospital bed.*

Mike's eyes widened, as he looks at his reflection in the kaleidoscopic glass, because before he was just getting pieces and now he's so close to figuring it out.